SKETCHES OF LINCOLN.

The Hanks Girls at a Camp Meeting.

THOMAS LINCOLN AS A FARMER.

Abraham's First School Days — Dennis Hanks' Remembrance of the Olden Days. The Lincoln Family Cabin—An Uninviting Frontier Structure.

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II.

As a family the Hankses were peculiar to the civilization of early Kentucky. Illiterate and superstitious, they correspond to that nomadic class still to be met with throughout the south and known as "poor whites." They are happily and vividly depicted in the description of a camp meeting held at Elizabethtown, Ky., in 1806, which was furnished me in August, 1865, by an eyewitness.

"The Hanks girls," narrates the latter, "were great at camp meetings. I remember one in 1806. I will give you a scene, and if you will then read the books written on the subject you may find some apology for the superstitions that were said to be in Abe Lincoln's character. It was at a camp meeting, as before said, when a general shout was about to commence. Preparations were being made. A young lady invited me to stand on a bench by her side where we could see all over the altar. To the right a strong, athletic young man, about 25 years old, was being put in trim for the occasion, which was done by divesting him of all apparel except shirt and pants. On the left a young lady was being put in trim in much the same manner, so that her clothes would not be in the way and so that when her combs flew out her hair would go into graceful braids. She, too, was young, not more than 20 perhaps. The performance commenced about the same time by the young man on the right and the young lady on the left. Slowly and gracefully they worked their way toward the center, singing, shouting, hugging and kissing, generally their own sex, until at last nearer and nearer they came. The center of the altar was reached, and the two closed, with their arms around each other, the man singing and shouting at the top of his voice:

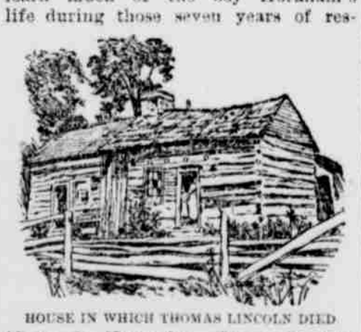
"I have Jesus in my arms,
Sweet as honey, strong as bacon ham.

"Just at this moment the young lady holding to my arm whispered: 'They are to be married next week. Her name is Hanks.' There were very few who did not believe this true religion, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and the man who could not believe it did well to keep it to himself. The Hankses were the finest singers and shouters in our country."

Here my informant stops, and on account of his death several years ago I failed to learn whether the young lady shouter who had figured in the foregoing scene was the president's mother or not. The fact that Nancy Hanks did marry that year gives color to the belief that it was she. As to the probability of the young man being Thomas Lincoln it is difficult to say. Such a performance as the one described must have required a little more emotion and enthusiasm than the tardy and inert carpenter was in the habit of manifesting.

The Boy at School.

Sarah, the sister of Abraham Lincoln, though in some respects like her brother, lacked his stature. She was thickset, had dark brown hair, deep gray eyes and an even disposition. She was married to Aaron Grigsby, in Spencer county, Ind., in the month of August, 1826, and died Jan. 20, 1828. Her brother accompanied her to school while they lived in Kentucky, but as he was only 7, and as she had not yet finished her ninth year when their father removed with them to Indiana, it is to be presumed that neither made much progress in the matter of school education. Still it is authoritatively stated that they attended two schools during this short period. One of these was kept by Zachariah Riney, the other by Caleb Hazel. It is difficult at this late day to learn much of the boy Abraham's life during those seven years of res-



HOUSE IN WHICH THOMAS LINCOLN DIED

idence in Kentucky. One man, who was a clerk in the principal store of the village where the Lincolns purchased their family supplies, remembers him as a "small boy who came sometimes to the store with his mother. He would take his seat on a keg of nails, and I would give him a lump of sugar. He would sit there and eat it like any other boy, but these little acts of kindness," observes my informant in an enthusiastic statement made in 1865, "so impressed his mind that I made a steadfast friend in a man whose power and influence have since been felt throughout the world."

A schoolmate of Lincoln's at Hazel's school, speaking of the master, says: "He perhaps could teach spelling and reading and indifferent writing and possibly could cipher to the rule of three, but he had no other qualification of a teacher unless we accept large size and bodily strength. Abe was a mere spindle of a boy, had his due proportion of harmless mischief, but as we lived in a country abounding in hazel switches, in the virtue of which the master had great faith, Abe of course received his due allowance."

This part of the boy's history is painfully vague and dim, and even after arriving at man's estate Mr. Lincoln was significantly reserved when reference was made to it. It is rarely mentioned in the autobiography furnished to Fell in 1859. John Duncan, afterward a preacher of some prominence in Kentucky, relates how he and Abe on one occasion ran a groundhog into a crevice between two rocks, and after working vainly almost two hours to get him out "Abe ran off about a quarter of a mile to a blacksmith shop and returned with an iron hook fastened to the end of a pole," and with this rude contrivance they virtually "hooked" the animal out of his retreat. Austin Gollaher of Hodgensville claims to have saved Lincoln from drowning one day as they were trying to "coon it" across Knob creek on a log. The boys were in pursuit of birds when young Lincoln fell into the water, and his vigilant companion, who still survives to narrate the thrilling story, fished him out with a sycamore branch.

Meanwhile Thomas Lincoln was becoming daily more dissatisfied with his situation and surroundings. He had purchased since his marriage, on the easy terms then prevalent, two farms or tracts of land in succession. No terms were easy enough for him, and the land, when the time for the payment of purchase money rolled around, reverted to its former owner.

Starting Life Anew.

Having determined on emigrating to Indiana, he began preparations for removal in the fall of 1816 by building for his use a flatboat. Loading it with his tools and other personal effects, including in the invoice, as we are told, 400 gallons of his whisky, he launched his "crazy craft" on a tributary of Salt creek known as Rolling Fork. Along with the current he floated down to the Ohio river, but his rudely made vessel, either from the want of experience in its navigator or because of its ill adaptation to withstand the force and caprices of the currents in the great river, capsized one day, and boat and cargo went to the bottom. The luckless boatman set to work, however, and by dint of great patience and labor succeeded in recovering the tools and the bulk of the whisky. Righting his boat, he continued down the river, landing at a point called Thompson's Ferry, in Perry county, on the Indiana side.

The head of the household now set resolutely to work to build a shelter for his family.

The structure, when completed, was 14 feet square and was built of small hewed logs. In the language of the day it was called a "half faced camp," being inclosed on all sides but one. It had neither floor, door nor windows. In this forbidding hovel these doughty emigrants braved the exposure of the varying season for an entire year. At the end of that time Thomas and Betsy Sparrow followed, bringing with them Dennis Hanks, and to them Thomas Lincoln surrendered the "half faced camp," while he moved into a more pretentious structure—a cabin inclosed on all sides.

Thomas Lincoln, with the aid of the Hankses and Sparrows, was for a time an attentive farmer. The implements of agriculture then in use were as rude as they were rare, and yet there is nothing to show that in spite of the slow methods then in vogue he did not make commendable speed. "We raised corn mostly," relates Dennis, "and some wheat—enough for a cake Sunday morning. Hog and venison hams were a legal tender and coonskins also. We raised sheep and cattle, but they did not bring much. Cows and calves were only worth $6 to $8, corn 10 cents and wheat 25 cents a bushel."

So with all his application and frugality the head of this ill assorted household made but little headway in the accumulation of the world's goods. We are told that he was indeed a poor man, and that during his entire stay in Indiana his land barely yielded him sufficient return to keep his larder supplied with the commonest necessaries of life. His skill as a hunter, though never brought into play unless at the angered demand of a stomach hungry for meat, in no slight degree made up for the lack of good management in the cultivation of his land. His son Abraham never evinced the same fondness for hunting, although his cousin Dennis with much pride tells us how we could kill a wild turkey on the wing. "At that time," relates one of the latter's playmates, descanting on the abundance of wild game, "there were a great many deer licks, and Abe and myself would go to these licks sometimes and watch of nights to kill deer, though Abe was not so fond of a gun or the sport as I was."

The cabin to which the Lincoln family removed after leaving the little half faced camp to the Sparrows was in some respects a pretentious structure. It was of hewed logs and was 18 feet square. It was high enough to admit of a loft, where Abe slept and to which he ascended each night by means of pegs driven in the wall. The rude furniture was in keeping with the surroundings. Three legged stools answered for chairs. The bedstead, made of poles fastened in the cracks of the logs on one side and supported by a crotched stick driven into the ground floor on the other, was covered with skins, leaves and old clothes. A table of the same finish as the stools, a few pewter dishes, a Dutch oven and a skillet completed the household outfit. In this uninviting frontier structure the future president was destined to pass the greater part of his boyhood. Withal his spirits were light, and it cannot be denied that he must have enjoyed unrestrained pleasure in his surroundings. It is related that one day the only thing that graced the dinner table was a dish of roasted potatoes. The elder Lincoln, true to the custom of the day, returned thanks for the blessing. The boy, realizing the scant proportions of the meal, looked up into his father's face and irreverently observed, "Dad, I call these"—meaning the potatoes—"mighty poor blessings."

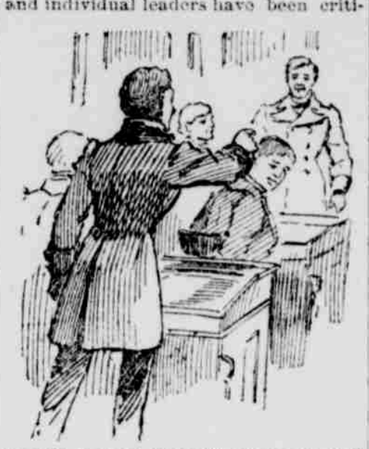
IN THE GOOD OLD DAYS.

Congressmen Then Were Not What They Are Now.

The Public Conscience of To-Day Does Not Countenance Excesses Which Our Forefathers Considered Mere Eccentricities.

[Special Washington Letter.]

The Fifty-first congress was the target for abuse and vilification of all extremist editorial writers in the democratic party; and the Fifty-third congress, which has recently adjourned, has been the target for the criticism and denunciation of all extremist republican editorial writers. While great men are exerting leadership in the evolution of great events, it is practically impossible for men to write the truths of history; and it is only after individuals and congresses are dead that the truths can be ascertained and published concerning them. During the past two years, and particularly during the last ten months, the majority party of the Fifty-third congress has been the subject of a great deal of raillery, and individual leaders have been criti-



"DON'T FORGET YOUR WOODEN SWORD."

cised and lampooned, as well as cartooned, in a manner more excessive and relentless than political leaders have ever been subjected to before. But, in the midst of it all, while many charges of a serious nature have been preferred, it is a significant fact that nobody has arraigned the Fifty-third congress for licentiousness or moral depravity.

It is indicative of the elevated moral tone of the entire country that better and purer men are constantly being selected and sent to the senate and house of representatives in the national capital. It would be practically impossible for any community in this period of our history to send a professional prize fighter to congress, solely on the ground of his reputation as a slugger and brutal beater of other men. It would also be practically impossible for any community to send a professional gambler to congress; but if such a thing were done the gambler would certainly be expelled from the house of representatives if he undertook to establish a gambling house in Washington and run that kind of a business during his term of membership in the house. And yet, thirty years ago, John Morrissey, a professional prize fighter, was a member of the house of representatives, kept a gambling house on Pennsylvania avenue, and was at the same time regarded as a popular representative by a large class of people in Washington city. Within a single generation the moral tone of the entire country has been so elevated that such a man could not now live such a life and prosper in the glare of public opinion. The members of the house of representatives, one year ago, were inclined to take official notice of the trial of a certain member of congress, but, upon reflection, concluded to leave, and did leave, Col. Breckenridge to the judgment of the people of the Ashland district. The verdict of that people was against immorality; and with the close of the Fifty-third congress on March 4, the public career of Col. Breckenridge also closed.

During the Fifty-first congress there were many stormy scenes and at least one personal encounter between representatives; but no gambling nor excessive drinking was noted. In the very early days of the republic our statesmen indulged in swearing, fighting, drinking, gambling and carousing. In 1798 there was a dreadful scene in the house of representatives. Roger Griswold, of Connecticut, and Matthew Lyon, of Vermont, came to blows. After a hot war of words, Lyon shouted to Griswold: "I have a mind to come back there and teach you good manners."

"If you come, Lyon," cried Griswold, "don't forget to bring your wooden sword!" alluding to the fact that the Vermonter was drummed out of the army during the revolution. Lyon, without a word, but in a frenzy of rage, crossed the room and deliberately spat in Griswold's face. There was a motion to expel him, and during its pendency the offender made a speech in self-defense which was so obscene that the newspapers of even that free-and-easy time could not fully indicate its purport. The motion to expel was defeated, whereupon Griswold ran over to Lyon's seat, jerked him out of it, threw him down and beat him on the floor of the house. Lyon escaped to the fireplace and defended himself with the tongs, but was beaten again. Friends of the parties at last interfered and the battle came to an end; but only after considerable damage had been done. Such a scene would be wholly impossible during the present generation, for our people have grown better as well as wiser than their ancestors were.

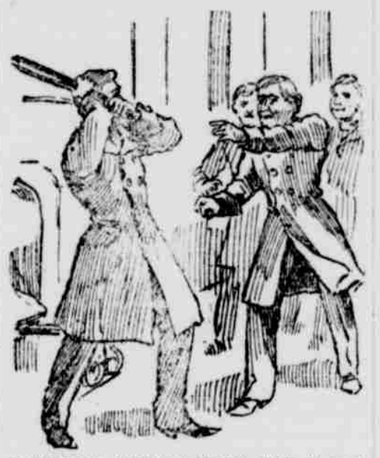
With one exception during recent years we have not only had better men in congress, but men of stainless reputation in the white house. Never again will our people place in the presidential office a man whose hands are stained with human blood or who has engaged in deadly dueling. When Gen. Jackson came to the white house he had the reputation of having wounded two men in duels and killed one. He had received two wounds in street fracases, one of which, from the hands of Senator Thomas H. Benton, he bore conspicuously all his life. It was said that "Old Hickory" had been in a dozen duels and a hundred personal encounters when he entered the white house. During these latter years we have had in the executive mansion high-bred Christian gentlemen and ladies. The quarrelsome, querulous swaggerer is no longer a popular political idol.

No matter what differences of opinion may arise, nor how excited statesmen may become in debate, nor what wicked things they may say to each other, there will never more be dueling in Washington nor in this vicinity. The day of blood atonement at the hands of man has gone forever. There remains but little of the dueling spirit, even in those states where the southern sun presumably gives to men hotter blood and quicker tempers.

During recent years there have been no drunken scenes in the capitol, either in the senate or house of representatives, with one exception. A celebrated debate was closed during the early days of the Fifty-third congress by a senator who has lived over from the past generation; and his voice was very shaky, and his ideas were mixed, because he had palpably dallied too long with the demon that destroys. Our fathers and grandfathers lived in an age when drunkenness was as normal as sobriety and temperance are to-day. In those times, maudlin scenes were common at the capitol, and they were not considered disgraceful; but were regarded as exceedingly funny. But the cause of temperance has grown and the influence of the ladies of the land has been so potent that the future legislation of our country will be the product of sober brains.

Just before the war, and during that great militant epoch, there were gambling houses all along Pennsylvania avenue from the capitol to the white house. To-day there is not a single game running in Washington which statesmen patronize. Of course there are some low dives here, as in all cities, but none which statesmen dare to enter. Before and during the war it was not considered wicked or improper for senators and representatives, strolling along Pennsylvania avenue, to enter public gambling houses and engage in games of chance. Nobody paid any attention to such conduct on the part of public men. The newspapers of to-day would quickly chronicle the event if any member of the senate or of the house should frequent such places. But in those days the newspapers made no mention of the lives of the great men who were attending to congressional duties but two or three hours each day, and passing from twelve to fifteen hours in saloons and gambling houses.

It is a comfortable reflection that the world is growing better; at least our portion of it. The Christian men and women throughout the country will be



DEFENDED HIMSELF WITH THE TONGS.

glad to know that their aggregate efforts have been producing notable results. We cannot see, in our several communities, that people are growing much better. But the men who are sent to congress are fairly representative of the people; and the fact that their moral tone is wonderfully elevated is strongly a manifestation of the fact that the sentiment of the country concerning morality and superior character is potential and elevating. When statesmen drank, fought duels, gambled and were publicly maudlin, they were representative of the people; for if the general moral tone of the country had been otherwise the statesmen would not have dared to defy public opinion. Then, as now, the public men courted popular favor. Then drunkenness and gambling were not unpopular with the people. Our statesmen are better to-day because our people are better.

SMITH D. FRY.

Wendell Phillips' Cutting Retort.

Dr. Furness, of Philadelphia, tells a characteristic story about Wendell Phillips. "Several clergymen," he says, "boarded a street car in Boston one day, and one of them, hearing it intimated that Wendell Phillips was in the car, got up and asked the conductor to point him out. The conductor did so, and the minister, going up to the orator, said: 'You are Mr. Phillips, I am told.' 'Yes, sir.' 'I should like to speak to you about something, and I trust, sir, you will not be offended.' 'There is no fear of it,' was the sturdy answer, and then the minister began to ask Mr. Phillips earnestly why he persisted in stirring up such an unfriendly agitation in one part of the country about an evil that existed in another part. 'Why,' said the clergyman, 'do you not go south and kick up this fuss and leave the north in peace?' Mr. Phillips was not the least ruffled, and answered, smilingly: 'You, sir, I presume, are a minister of the Gospel?' 'I am, sir,' said the clergyman. 'And your calling is to save souls from hell?' 'Exactly, sir.' 'Well, then, why don't you go there?' "—Life's Calendar.

A Comparison.

The czar and Mr. Howells are
Alike in certain spots;
It may at first seem singular,
But both of them hate plots.
—Puck.